

August 19, 2008

Greetings distinguished guests and members of The Maryland Commission on Capital Punishment. My name is Ginger Beale and I would like to share my story with you.

I am a proud employee of the University of Maryland At Baltimore. My job location is right next to Medical Examiner for the state of Maryland. I used to get invited by staff to have lunch with them there very often. I would joke that I didn't even want to have a cup of water there. I'd say; *"the only way to get me there is if Jesus took me"*. I never thought that I would have to go there concerning my child.

There are moments that define a lifetime. The phone call tidings of great joy or unspeakable sorrow. On February 6, 2006 I went through a successful heart surgery. What I did not know was that God was giving me a new heart because He knew what was coming one year later. On February 11, 2007 my son Harold Robinson Jr (MURT) was killed while doing his job as a security guard for a nightclub. The criminals that were removed by other Security from the establishment earlier that morning. They were being disruptive, urinating on customers and the floor. This resulted in security asking them to leave, which resulted in a fight and threat by the criminals to return. Around 9:30 PM, they did return and subsequently shot my child in the back. I was told that my son was a hero that night. My son I am told pushed everyone ahead of him.

He took the majority of the bullets and the people in the club were safe.

Previously Harold had quit his job there because I had warned him about his safety. During the time of his unemployment, my son looked so hard for a job. He desperately wanted to work. However, his past record prevented him from getting hired at the better places that he applied to. He sent his application in to University Hospital, the Maryland Library system, a company that needed drivers and many more places. However, the club was what was available to him. After some time of looking, he went back to the club. The weekend my son lost his life was the first week he had returned to work. I remember him saying to me; *"Mom, you don't know how hard it is to get a job with a record."*

I must tell you that my son doted on me. He also always tried to look out for his sister because he respected the women of his family so much. He took me everywhere and was always there for me. He wouldn't even ask, he'd just say; *"Ma get dressed, I'm coming to get you"*. Every conversation we had was about what Jesus says, because my son had become saved, before he died. I know the Lord and I know right from wrong, which is why I pray every day. We are not perfect people, but that must not stop us from doing what is right before God.

We mother's wear masks. When I'm hurt and angry I fight back and this is how I fight back. I am the President of the Baltimore chapter of Mother's In Charge. Our mission is to work to eradicate the number of violent crimes that plague our city, in addition to providing violence prevention, intervention, and education. I do what I do in the community with Mother's in Charge and the Young Ambassador's of Baltimore's Safe & Sound to make it a better place in the city. This is arduous, tiresome work, but Jesus gave me the heart to do this because it has become my mission.

I've been through six postponements for the trial of my son's murderers and each time I go to court it hurts. What often gets lost in cases where someone is killed is the actual strain on the victim's family. The focus turns to the criminal rather than the victim. That must stop. Cases such as my son's murder are dynamic and are to not be treated with anything but the highest regard. It's good to see that you are beginning the process to look at the surrounding issues of our criminal justice system. Just keep in mind the major toll all of this takes on the families who lose a loved one to violence.

I thank Jesus every day for the heart and the strength to still push ahead. It is He who gave me the mind to oppose the death penalty. I live my life like King David, chasing after God's heart, to learn and practice what is right in His sight. I thank you for your attention. It is my hope that as you examine the death penalty you will make the recommendation to abolish it.

Respectfully,

Ginger Dukes-Wise